United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

IN REPLY REFER TO:

FIRE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE
120 Laurel Street
Patchogue, New York 11772
(631) 289-4810

April 19, 2005

L7671

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Northeast Region

From: Superintendent

Subject: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), Fire Island National Seashore Fire Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

Fire Island National Seashore was created in 1964 by an Act of Congress (Public Law 88-587). Fire Island is a narrow 32-mile long barrier island located in Suffolk County south of Long Island, New York. Approximately 26 miles (42 km) of Fire Island and several smaller islands are encompassed within the Seashore boundaries. The Seashore was established "for the purpose of conserving and preserving for the use of future generations certain relatively unspoiled and undeveloped beaches, dunes and other natural features within Suffolk County, New York, which possess high values to the Nation as examples of unspoiled areas of great natural beauty in close proximity to large concentrations of urban population."

In 1965, Congress added the 615-acre William Floyd Estate, a historic property, to the Seashore (Public Law 89-244). The estate is the former home of General William Floyd, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and subsequent generations of the family. The manor house, a 25 room, two-story historic structure, is located in the northern part of the property. Included on the property are 11 historical buildings and their contents and the family cemetery.

In 1980, Public Law 96-585 designated 1363 acres of parkland, located between Smith Point and Watch Hill, as the Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness area. Historic structures, such as those at Fire Island Lighthouse and William Floyd Estate, are administered by the National Park Service. The Otis Pike Fire Island High Dune Wilderness, at the eastern end of the Seashore, is the only NPS Wilderness Area in the North Atlantic Region and the only Wilderness Area of any designation in the State of New York.

An environmental assessment (EA) was prepared to better understand the environmental effects associated with activities which will be incorporated in the park's Fire Management Plan, including wildland fire suppression, prescribed fire, and manual/mechanical thinning hazardous fuels reductions. Environmental issues identified during scoping and evaluated in the EA included firefighter and public safety; soils; air quality; water resources; floodplains and wetlands; vegetation; wildlife; threatened, endangered, or sensitive species; visitor experiences, aesthetic resources, and park operations; and cultural resources. Because of the park's small size, wildland fire use was not considered in the park's selected alternative.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative in the EA, Alternative 2, is the selected alternative. Even though Fire Island National Seashore consists of two distinct areas, the park will probably be managed as a single fire management unit (FMU). Under the selected alternative, all wildland fires in the park, human-caused fires and naturally ignited fires (*e.g.* lightning), will be declared wildland fires and suppressed using an appropriate management response. Appropriate management response (AMR) provides for the full range of suppression strategies for management of wildland fires. Under this scenario, managers may choose to utilize natural or man-made barriers in a confine strategy to lower cost, increase firefighter safety, or minimize the negative impacts of suppression actions. Wildland fire suppression activities will follow Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) guidelines. Mechanical treatment would be used to clear vegetation away from structures, cultural resources, private property boundaries, and other high-value resources in order to reduce fire spread potential, create defensible space, and provide increased public and firefighter safety. Prescribed burning may be conducted for hazard fuels reduction, maintenance of fire-dependent species, and research. Prescribed fires would be planned and approved consistent with the method and format required by RM-18, including compliance with smoke management regulations or guidelines. Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments may be used individually or in combination (including sequence) to achieve natural resource, cultural landscape, and fuels management objectives.

Fire management actions identified under all alternatives have the potential to adversely affect natural and cultural resources. Measures undertaken to avoid or minimize adverse impacts of wildland fire suppression, hazard tree removal, and/or hazard fuel reductions include:

- Use of rubber-tired vehicles involved in fire suppression, prescribed burning, and mechanical hazard fuels management projects to minimize the potential of disturbing archeological sites.
- Use of water and/or natural barriers as much as possible rather than construction of handlines to contain wildland and prescribed fires to minimize the potential of disturbing archeological sites.
- Use of a suite of mitigation actions, used either individually or in combination, to reduce the potential effect of wildland fires and suppression actions on historic structures. These include blacklining around the structures, treating with fire retardant foam concurrent with fires, wrapping with heat reflective materials, and establishing sprinkler systems on and around structures concurrent with wildland fire suppression activities.

- Contact the park's cultural resource specialist concurrent with the detection of wildland fires and during planning stages of hazard fuels reduction projects and prescribed burns to ensure avoidance, to the greatest extent feasible, of cultural resources.
- Monitor fire and hazard fuels management activities and halt work if previously unknown resources are located; protect and record newly discovered resources.
- Brief suppression, prescribed fire, hazard fuels, and hazard tree personnel about protecting natural and cultural resources.
- In fire suppression operations, protection of structures and features will be more important than minimizing acres burned.
- Coordinate with other fire suppression agencies and resources to ensure the best management practices are used in all fire, hazard tree, and hazard fuels management activities.
- Coordinate rehabilitation of firelines and other disturbed areas with natural and cultural resource specialist.
- Safety protocols will be established for all hazard tree, hazard fuels, suppression, and prescribed fire activities.
- Minimum impact suppression tactics would be employed in all tactical operations except as noted below.
- Fire retardant, if used, must be on the approved list of retardants used by the U.S. Forest Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management.
- Motorized equipment would not normally be used off of established roadways in the park. However, due to potential rapid rates of spread and the emergency nature of fires near the boundary, off-road use of motorized equipment, such as all-terrain vehicles and wildland fire engines, may be authorized by the Superintendent.
- Machinery used in hazard fuels and hazard tree activities, such as mowers and brush hogs, would be used only when soils were dry to minimize soil compaction and erosion.
- All extended attack and prescribed fire operations would have a park employee designated and available to assist suppression operations as a Resource Advisor. If qualified employees were not available, a Resource Advisor would be ordered through the interagency dispatch system.
- Helicopters may be used to transport personnel, supplies, and equipment. Improvement of landing sites would be kept to a minimum and would include consultation with the assigned Resource Advisor. Helibases and landing sites would be rehabilitated to pre-fire conditions to the extent reasonably possible.
- Suppression actions would avoid aerial and ground applications of retardant or foam within 300 feet of identified water sources.
- Except for spot maintenance to remove obstructions, no modifications would be made to roadways, trails, water sources, or clearings. All sites where modifications are made or obstructions removed would be rehabilitated to prefire conditions to the extent reasonably possible.
- Earthmoving equipment such as tractors, graders, bulldozers, or other tracked vehicles would not be used for fire suppression or prescribed fire. If special circumstances warrant extreme measures to ensure protection, the Superintendent may authorize the use of heavy equipment.
- Fireline location would avoid sensitive areas wherever possible.

- Following fire suppression activities, firelines would be recontoured and water-barred.
- As a matter of practice, burned areas would not be reseeded unless there are overriding concerns about establishment of invasive nonnative species. Any reseeding would be with native species and occur only with the Superintendent's prior approval.
- Park neighbors, park visitors, and local residents would be notified of all planned fire and fuels management activities with the potential to affect them. The public would be notified about treatment activities through procedures identified in project-specific work plans. These methods could include press releases, park entrance postings, local radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, and direct mailings. Emergency Services personnel will be contacted so that emergency calls into 911 can receive appropriate responses.
- Hazard fuels removal around historic structures would mitigate the potential for impacts from wildland fires. Park staff will complete Section 106 consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) prior to implementing hazard fuel reduction projects.
- Other standard cultural resource mitigation measures include the following: prior to doing treatment work, conduct an inventory of previously unsurveyed areas using an archeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's standards; dispose of slash in areas lacking cultural sites; avoid ground disturbance in areas containing known cultural sites; prior to implementation of work, protect character-defining elements of potential cultural landscapes.
- Prescribed fires will not be planned near cultural and other sensitive resources unless adequate planning has assured their protection.
- Prescribed fires would be scheduled for periods when ventilation is adequate to disperse smoke.
- Smoke management reporting procedures for burning in New York would be followed.
- For prescribed fires, mitigations would be included in the prescribed fire burn plan. Park staff will complete Section 106 consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) prior to implementing prescribed fire projects.

Predicting the average annual acreage of unwanted wildland fire is quite uncertain, dependent as it is on climatic conditions, fuels conditions, locations, and other factors. Since park establishment in 1974, an average of 1.1 wildland fires have occurred annually (range 0-5 fires) with over 80% of wildland fires limited to 10 acres or less. In most years when fires occurred, the park experienced 2-4 fires. According to the park's fire history records, five fires have grown to 30-40 acres and one fire was nearly 150 acres in size. Average fire size was nearly 13 acres. If the park averages 1-2 fires per year within the protection area and fire size averages about 13 acres, the annual burned area would be 13-26 acres. Appropriate management response (AMR) provides for the full range of suppression strategies for management of wildland fires. Under this scenario, managers may choose to utilize natural or man-made barriers in a confine strategy to lower cost, increase firefighter safety, or minimize the impacts of suppression actions. Under the selected alternative, the acreage burned by wildland fire may increase slightly from the current estimated 13-26 acres since fire managers would have the option of selecting from the full range of suppression strategies.

Mechanical treatment would be used to remove hazardous trees and herbaceous vegetation near structures, cultural resources, park boundaries, and visitor use areas to reduce potential fire intensity, increase defensible space and human safety, minimize risk to private and public property, and facilitate visitor use activities. Mechanical treatment methods include cutting, mowing, chopping, limbing, chipping, sawing, and similar activities using hand-held tools. Hazard tree removal is carried out under the current management practices of the park. Associated vehicle use would be with rubber-tired, rather than tracked, vehicles and would result in minimal ground disturbance.

Prescribed fire may be used on those areas where mechanical treatments are not effective in reducing medium to fine fuels and/or further reduction of fuels is needed. In addition, prescribed fire would be used where effective mechanical removal of medium to fine fuels would require heavy machinery and cause ground disturbance. Prescribed fire may be used to maintain reduced levels of wildland fuel and remove ladder fuels within treatment areas.

Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments may be used individually or in combination (including sequence) to achieve natural resource, cultural landscape, and fuels management objectives. Each treatment would involve developing an implementation plan and obtaining appropriate permits and approvals. Mechanical treatment of hazard fuels has the potential to treat an additional 10-15 acres annually. Prescribed burning for hazard fuels reduction, maintenance of fire-dependent communities, and research may average 20-40 acres per year for the initial 5-year period. Prescribed fires would be planned and approved consistent with the method and format required by RM-18, including compliance with smoke management regulations or guidelines.

Hand crews and chain saws would be the primary means of mechanical fuel management used in forested and shrub habitats near park boundaries and close to park facilities at risk from wildland fires. In areas with grasslands, mowing machines would be the primary means of treatment. Lightweight vehicles would be appropriate in areas where impact, slope, aspect, vegetation type and structure, and distance from developed areas dictate their use. Park personnel and contractors using hand and power tools would perform mechanical fuel reduction in the treatment areas.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT SELECTED

The No Action Alternative

Under the no-action alternative, the fire and fuels management program would consist of initial attack on wildland fires, mowing herbaceous vegetation in old fields and near historic structures, and removal of individual hazard trees in selected areas.

Suppressing wildland fires (initial attack) is accomplished by depriving a fire of additional fuels (e.g., building a fire line that is cleared down to mineral soil) or by cooling the fire sufficiently to prevent further combustion (e.g., applying water to the flaming front). Fire Island NS would not have the option of using natural and/or man-made barriers in a confine strategy except when appropriate to ensure firefighter safety. Since park establishment in 1974, an average of 1.1

wildland fires have occurred annually (range 0-5 fires) with over 80% of wildland fires limited to 10 acres or less. In most years when fires occurred, the park experienced 2-4 fires. According to the park's fire history records, five fires have grown to 30-40 acres and one fire was nearly 150 acres in size. Average fire size was nearly 13 acres. If the park averages 1-2 fires per year within the protection area and fire size averages about 13 acres, the annual burned area under the no-action alternative would be 13-26 acres.

Mechanical treatment would be used to remove hazardous trees and herbaceous vegetation near structures, cultural resources, park boundaries, and visitor use areas to reduce potential fire intensity, increase defensible space and human safety, minimize risk to private and public property, and facilitate visitor use activities. Mechanical treatment methods include cutting, mowing, chopping, limbing, chipping, sawing, and similar activities using hand-held tools. The current program consists of mechanical removal of individual hazard trees and mowing herbaceous vegetation on about 60-80 acres annually. Associated vehicle use would be with rubber-tired, rather than tracked, vehicles and would result in minimal ground disturbance.

The no action alternative was rejected because it does not meet the management objectives of Fire Island National Seashore as fully as does the selected alternative. The no action alternative does not effectively provide for the maintenance of fire dependent ecosystems. Further, it would be less effective than the selected alternative in removing hazardous fuels.

Alternative 3

This alternative is similar to Alternative 2 except that use of prescribed fire would not be permitted. Using an appropriate management response to unwanted wildland fire, fire managers may choose to utilize natural or man-made barriers in a confine strategy to lower cost, increase firefighter safety, or minimize the impacts of suppression action. Mechanical treatment of hazard fuels would be the same as under Alternative 2. The acreage burned by wildland fires may increase slightly from Alternative 1 since fire managers would have the option of selecting from the full range of suppression strategies.

Alternative 3 was not adopted because it does not meet the management objectives of Fire Island National Seashore as fully as does the selected alternative. Alternative 3 does allow for the effective removal of hazardous fuels, but it does not effectively provide for the maintenance of fire dependent ecosystems.

Alternatives Considered and Rejected

Two additional alternatives were identified in the scoping process but were not analyzed in the EA.

Alternative 4 was called the wildland fire use alternative. This alternative would employ the full range of available fire management strategies including suppression using an appropriate management response, wildland fire use, and prescribed burning. Mechanical fuel reduction methodologies would be the same as under Alternatives 2 and 3. This alternative differs from

other alternatives in its authorization of wildland fire use (aka wildland fire used for resource benefit). This alternative was rejected because Fire Island National Seashore is not of sufficient size to manage free-burning fires without substantial threat to cultural resources and/or park neighbors. Managing wildland fire for resource benefits also requires personnel with specialized skills and qualifications. It is unlikely that qualified personnel would be readily available to Fire Island National Seashore within the time periods required by policy.

Alternative 5, the no management alternative, would allow all wildland fires to burn unimpeded by management action. No other manipulative activities (e.g. hazard fuels management) would be permitted. This alternative was rejected because it compromises public safety, causes undue risk to values to be protected (e.g. historic structures) and is inconsistent with federal policy and regulations.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative is also the environmentally preferred alternative. The environmentally preferred alternative is the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed by §101 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This includes alternatives that:

1) fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;

2) ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

3) attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

4) preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice;

5) achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and

6) enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

In essence, the environmentally preferred alternative would be the one(s) that "causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources".

In this case, the Park's Selected Alternative is also the environmentally preferred alternative for Fire Island National Seashore since it best meets goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 described above. Under this alternative, fire management activities would restore and maintain native plant communities in

the park and help protect park resources and adjacent lands from the threat of wildland fires. Finally, the alternative best protects and helps preserve the historic, cultural, and natural resources in the park for current and future generations.

THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

As defined at 40 CFR §1508.27, from the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality that implement the provisions of NEPA, significance is determined by examining the following criteria:

Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that on balance the effect will be beneficial.

There are overall benefits to the human and natural environment at Fire Island National Seashore from the proposed action. The selected alternative in particular would have positive effects on the human health and safety of the park's visitors, staff, and neighboring residents, on park facilities, vegetation communities, and landscapes. Hazard fuels reduction along sections of the park's perimeter would lessen the possibility of wildland fire spreading from park lands to adjacent private or public lands.

The selected alternative does not entail any significant adverse impacts on firefighter and public safety; soils; air quality; water resources; floodplains and wetlands; vegetation; wildlife; threatened, endangered, or sensitive species; visitor experiences, aesthetic resources, and park operations; and cultural resources. These impacts are negligible to minor, localized, adverse or beneficial, and short-term. None of the impacts rise to the level of significance.

The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

When conducting fire management activities, human health and safety is the primary concern. Under the selected alternative, there will likely be very minor human health and safety impacts (small cuts and bruises) to firefighters resulting from wildland fire suppression, prescribed burning and mechanical reduction of hazard fuels. The selected alternative provides the best protection since prescribed burning and hazard fuels reduction activities in the park will minimize the fire danger to the park staff and nearby private residences and communities.

Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, and wetlands.

As described in the EA, the intent of the action alternatives was to provide the maximum amount of protection for the important natural and cultural resources of the park. After consultation with the New York State Historic Preservation Office it was determined that the implementation of the selected alternative will result in no significant adverse effects to cultural resources since during fire management activities mitigation measures will be put in place to protect these areas.

Some soils in Fire Island National Seashore are classified as prime and unique farmlands. However, the proposed action does not include any components such as construction or water

developments that would change the use of the land or diminish the potential value of the lands as designated. The cumulative impact of the selected alternative on prime and unique farmlands is negligible.

The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There were no controversial impacts identified during the analysis done for the EA, and no controversial issues were raised during the public review of the EA.

Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no identified risks associated with the selected alternative that are unique or unknown, and there are no effects associated with the selected alternative that are highly uncertain identified during the analysis for the EA or during the public review of the EA.

The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The selected alternative does not establish a precedent for any future actions that may have significant effects, nor does it represent decisions about future considerations. The purpose of this action is to develop a fire management plan and program that achieve desired natural and cultural resource conditions while minimizing the fire danger to park resources and adjacent lands from hazardous fuel accumulations.

Under such a program, hazard fuels reduction treatments and prescribed burning would be conducted over several years to manage native plant communities, reduce hazardous fuels along the wildland urban interface, restore and protect the historic vistas, and to reduce the extent of noxious weeds. This program will be evaluated and, if necessary, revised during future revisions to the park's Fire Management Plan.

Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The EA determined that there will be no significant cumulative impacts associated with the selected alternative.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

The William Floyd manor house is a two-story, 25-room, historic structure located in the northern part of the Estate. In addition to the main house, there are several historic out buildings, a cemetery, and lawns and gardens. There is a maintenance area including one permanent structure and two barns. The historic buildings are clumped in a 2-acre section of the

33-acre core historic district. Mowed and cultivated lawns are adjacent to the historic structures; there are no wildland fuels adjacent to the structures. The buildings are also surrounded by grounds that hide historic foundations, dumpsites, and roadbeds. The family cemetery is also located close to but outside the historic core to the east. The William Floyd Estate was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in October of 1980.

The first Fire Island Lighthouse was established in 1825 (the lighthouse present today was built in 1858). The Light Station area contains the remains of the first lighthouse- at Fire Island Inlet. Additionally, sites and features associated with the second lighthouse (1858), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), United States Life Saving Service (USLSS), and Voice of America are present in the area. The Fire Island Lighthouse was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in September of 1981.

There are archeologically sensitive areas, features, and sites throughout the park. These include both pre-European contact and post-European contact resources. The William Floyd Estate contains extensive areas of archeological sensitivity, from pre-contact to mid-twentieth century. An archeological overview is ongoing as part of the preparation for a new General Management Plan.

The earliest inhabitants of Fire Island were likely the Secatogues who used the island for hunting. Cultural resource surveys have documented several sites related to historic American Indian use. Traditional cultural uses have not been identified. An Ethnographic Overview Assessment is underway as part of the preparation for a new General Management Plan.

Cultural Landscape Studies are underway at the William Floyd Estate and Fire Island Lighthouse as part of the preparation for a new General Management Plan. The expectation is that these two areas will be recommended for designation as cultural landscapes.

The EA was written in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. In a letter dated February 16, 2005, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NYSHPO) concurred that the proposed action will have no adverse effect on the cultural resources of the park.

The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Several threatened, endangered, or sensitive species occur in Fire Island National Seashore. These include the common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), least tern (*Sterna antillarum*), northeast beach tiger beetle (*Cicindela dorsalis dorsalis*), piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*), great egret (*Casmerodius albus*), snowy egret (*Egretta thula*), black skimmer (*Rynchops niger*), eastern mud turtle (*Kinosternon subrubrum*), seabeach amaranth (*Amaranthus pumilus*), seabeach knotweed (*Polygonum glaucum*), swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*), slender marsh-pink (*Sabatia campanulata*), graceful sedge (*Carex venusta var. minor*), and rough rush-grass (*Sporobolus clandestinus*). Narrow-leaf sea-blite (*Suaeda linearis*), golden dock (*Rumex maritimus* var. *fueginus*), and retrorse flatsedge (*Cyperus retrorsus*) are known from historical records; there are no recent observations of these species.

The National Park Service has determined that the selected alternative would have *no effect* or *may effect, but is not likely to adversely affect* the identified species. In a letter dated March 24, 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this assessment.

Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

This action violates no federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

IMPAIRMENT

The National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 and related laws mandate that the units of the national park system must be managed in a way that leaves them "unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations". These laws give the NPS the management discretion to allow certain impacts to park resources and values when necessary and appropriate to fulfill the purposes of a park, so long as the impact does not constitute impairment of the affected resources and values. Director's Order 12 states that environmental documents will evaluate and describe impacts that may constitute an impairment of park resources or values. In addition, the decision document will summarize impacts and whether or not such impacts may constitute an impairment of park resources or values. An impact would be more likely to constitute impairment to the extent that it affects a resource or value whose conservation is:

1. necessary to fulfill specific purposes identified in the establishing legislation or proclamation of the park,
2. key to the natural or cultural integrity of the park or to opportunities for enjoyment of the park, or
3. identified as a specific goal in the park's general management plan or other relevant NPS planning documents.

In addition to reviewing the list of significance criteria, the National Park Service has determined that implementation of the proposal will not constitute an impairment to the critical resources and values of the Park. This conclusion is based on a thorough analysis of the environmental impacts described in the Fire Management Plan EA, public comment, relevant scientific studies, and the professional judgment of the decision-maker guided by the direction in NPS *Management Policies 2001*. The plan under the selected alternative will result in only negligible to minor adverse direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to firefighter and public safety; vegetation; wildlife and wildlife habitat; threatened, endangered, or sensitive species; air quality; wetlands; soils; cultural resources; visitor experience, aesthetic resources and park operations. Overall, the plan results in benefits to park resources and values, opportunities for their enjoyment, and it does not result in their impairment.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Internal scoping was conducted with the park's Interdisciplinary Team and Regional Office specialists. Issues which were raised in scoping included:

- Fire events may have adverse impacts on cultural and sensitive natural resources within the park, including sensitive species and federally listed threatened and endangered species.
- Fuels are accumulating in areas, increasing fire hazard conditions.
- Visitors, staff, adjacent owners, and firefighters may be at risk during high fire severity periods.
- Smoke near major roads is a public safety concern.
- Fires can easily cross boundaries in many locations along Fire Island NS.
- Consultation should be initiated pursuant to §7 of the Endangered Species Act and §106 of the National Historic Preservation Act to ensure that proposed actions would not adversely affect endangered species and cultural resources.

The park also conducted external scoping with partners, cooperators, and permitting agencies. On March 11, a scoping meeting was conducted with many cooperating local agencies (see Chapter 4). Additional public scoping was not conducted. No additional issues were raised during external scoping.

The environmental assessment was made available for public review and comment during a 30-day period ending January 15, 2005. A press release announcing its availability was issued to the local media on December 13, 2004. In addition, individual notices were mailed to interested individuals and groups and federal, state, and local government agencies. The environmental assessment was posted to the park's webpage and hardcopies were distributed to local libraries. Copies were also made available upon request.

A letter dated January 12, 2005, from the Fire Island Wilderness Committee expresses concern that the EA does not specifically mention a "minimum requirement" concept for fire management within the wilderness. The EA does repeatedly specify use of MIST (minimum impact suppression tactics) in the wilderness and elsewhere on the Seashore. The minimum requirement concept is a wilderness management concept which is superimposed on fire management activities in wilderness by policy and need not be discussed in detail in an analysis of fire management impacts.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office, by letter of February 16, 2005, recommended that any archeological sites exposed by the burning off of cover vegetation be monitored for adverse impacts from erosion or illegal collecting until cover vegetation has re-established; that previously unsurveyed areas be inventoried before prescribed burning; and that the William Floyd Estate and the Fire Island Lighthouse each maintain Emergency Fire Management Plans, and that these properties be protected during prescribed fire episodes.

No public or cooperating agency comments were received which requested changes in the environmental analyses or disputed the conclusions of the analyses. Therefore, no changes are indicated to the text of the environmental assessment.

CONCLUSION

The selected alternative does not constitute an action that normally requires preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). The selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment. Negative environmental impacts that could occur are negligible or minor in intensity. There are no significant impacts on public health, public safety, threatened or endangered species, sites or districts listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or other unique characteristics of the region. No highly uncertain or controversial impacts, unique or unknown risks, significant cumulative effects, or elements of precedence were identified. Implementation of the action will not violate any federal, state, or local environmental protection law.

Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and thus will not be prepared.

Recommended:_____/s/_____ _____

Michael T. Reynolds Date
Superintendent

Approved:_____/s/_____ _____

Mary A. Bomar Date
Acting Regional Director
Northeast Region